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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000831

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [IZ](#) [KDEM](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: KURDISH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RULES ON UPCOMING
ELECTIONS

Classified By: PMIN Robert Ford for Reasons 1.4 (d).

¶1. (SBU) According to contacts at UNAMI, on 25 March the Kurdistan National Assembly (KNA) adopted a number of amendments to the electoral law for the Iraqi Kurdistan National Assembly. KRG President Barzani is expected to sign the bill shortly, and we do not anticipate challenges. These amendments, and a number of related decisions, would come into immediate effect, further paving the way for the conduct of elections for the 111-member KNA, or Kurdistan Iraq Parliament (KIP) as it is now to be called.

Key points that were decided:

----- Closed/Open List

The KIP elections will be held on the basis of a closed list system. A proposal for an open list system (whereby voters would be able to cast a vote for an individual candidate on a party list, not just the party list as a whole) was defeated. Each party list must contain at least three candidates.

----- Women's Quota

At least 30 percent of the candidates on party lists must be women.

----- Relationships between IHEC and Regional Office

IHEC will conduct the upcoming KIP election, but a new independent Kurdish Election Commission is to be established over the next 8 to 12 months and will oversee future elections. IHEC regulations would apply to the elections provided they do not conflict with the laws enacted by the KNA.

----- Complaints Process

Complaints related to the KIP elections will be handled by the IHEC at the Kurdish Regional Election Office. A new Kurdistan Electoral Judicial Panel will be established to take final decisions on appeals against election results (rather than the Electoral Judicial Panel in Baghdad).

----- Out of Region Voters

People from the region who are outside the region will have the right to participate in the elections. IHEC is to take steps to implement this provision (which would require registration of Iraqi Kurdistan and voters abroad and internally displaced). (Note: UNAMI concurs that there is some ambiguity on what "outside the region" means and expects greater precision on this issue in coming weeks. End Note).

----- Minorities

Eleven of the 111 KIP seats will be reserved for minorities: 5 for Chaldean/Assyrian/Syrian; 5 for Turkmen; 1 for Armenian.

Comment

¶2. (C) The decisions by the KNA set the stage for the holding of KRG elections sometime after May 19. While May 19 was the original target date for the elections, coinciding with the seventeenth anniversary of the first elections held in Kurdistan and therefore a date that holds symbolic appeal, there is little likelihood the elections will take place in May, both for political and organizational reasons. IHEC strongly prefers at least a 90-day lead time to prepare, which would push the elections to June at the earliest. The KNA amendments do not specifically address the date of the election. We have not seen the text of the KNA amendments but expect to in the next few days.

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